

MATS ALVESSON (SWEDEN)

## Questioning Rationality and Ideology: On Critical Organization Theory

In everyday thinking, social science, and organization research, the predominant rationality of the late-capitalist and other highly industrialized societies is usually taken for granted. This constitutes *one* special form of rationality. Its aim is to realize such goals as the maximal exploitation of nature, i.e., productivity and economic efficiency. Both resource maximization, with the help of an advanced collection of apparatus and expertise, and the exploitation of these resources, with the aim of creating "the good life," i.e., primarily material prosperity, constitute the core of this rationality.

When this form of rationality is elevated to Rationality per se, i.e., the only thinkable or reasonable form of rationality, rationality tends *even* to become ideology. Rationality and ideology are joined in a manner that is difficult to penetrate. According to the Frankfurt tradition, which is one of the main inspirational sources for this article, it is precisely such a fusion between rationality and ideology that characterizes the predominant forms of conception in the technological-capitalist society. In the one-

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Dr. Alvesson is associated with the Department of Business Administration, University of Lund, P.O. Box 5136, S 220 05, Lund, Sweden.

dimensional society (Marcuse, 1964; Habermas, 1971), thinking and social organization are dominated by the ideology of technological or instrumental rationality. The dominance is so complete that this ideology cannot be identified as ideology. Counterideologies and cognitive/social attempts to negate the dominance of this rationality do not, therefore, tend to result in any major social penetration.

Organization research and everyday concepts about work and organizational conditions tend to be subordinate to this one-dimensional or nondialectic conception of reality in the organizational context. In this way a central and, in many ways, problematic aspect of the functioning of organizations is taken for granted. The dominance of this rationality is thereby reproduced. Thus, the attitude of organization research toward the question of rationality becomes, to a great extent, an ideological question.

I have briefly intimated the problems I shall deal with in this article. My ambition can even be expressed as an attempt to contribute to the development of a critical organization theory. What I mean by this will be explained more precisely further on in the article. Here I shall say only that criticism of rationality and ideology are essential features of this attempt

### **Criticism of predominant organization theories**

Criticism of the predominant perspective(s) within organization theory has, of course, always existed. It was at the end of the 1970s, however, that a more fundamental criticism first appeared. In this criticism, the problems of organizational goals, rationalities, ideological conditions, social relations, and class conditions in organizations are identified. A view of conflict inspired by Marxism has been contrasted to the predominant consensus understanding. Some examples of studies with this approach are those of Benson (1977a), Heydebrand (1977), Burawoy (1979), Burrell and Morgan (1979), Burrell (1980), and Clegg and Dunkerley (1980). In these studies, the guiding principles for an

alternative organization theory are presented, to a greater or lesser extent.

Zey-Ferrell presents a summary of the development of the traditional perspectives within organization theory, the U.S. one in particular (which, until recently, even dominated the European perspective) (see Zey-Ferrell, 1982; Zey-Ferrell and Aiken, 1981). In works by Zey-Ferrell and co-workers, the critical edge is directed at what the authors feel to be the predominant structural and contingency-theoretical approaches.<sup>1</sup> Their criticism of current organization studies is summarized in the four statements below, which also supply a survey of characteristic features in the predominant organization theories.

I. *The view of organizations is asociological.* Organizational conditions are not related to the society in which the organizations exist. The relevant studies deal mainly with issues that interest business managers more than others, the aim being to increase the efficiency of the organization.

II. *The studies supply an ideologically conservative picture of organizations.* As organization-theoretical analysis is usually concerned with the conceptions and interests of the predominating elite, the *status quo* is maintained and consolidated in organizations.

III. *The aims of the organizations are reified.* Readers are given to understand that it is organizations that have goals and targets, not individuals, groups, or other associations consisting of interested parties.<sup>2</sup> It is postulated—often without preliminary discussion—that organizations have aims, or that everybody involved in an organization's activities is in agreement with everyone else about the existing goals, and that organizations function on the basis of one (and only one) type of rationality:

Because there is only one rationality, that of the dominant-administrative segment of the organization, there is no questioning of the *status quo*, the existing distribution of rewards, and the present power arrangements. Rather, there is only the questioning of how well the organization functions, given the

goals and objectives of that dominant coalition. (Zey-Ferrell and Aiken, 1981. P. 8.)

The predominant organization theory assumes that organizations are characterized by consensus with regard to values. By and large, all organization members presumably share the same fundamental values and attitudes. This means that even if different individuals may possess varying ambitions and motives, those ambitions and motives are all based on a common set of norms belonging within the framework of an organizational consensus.

IV. *In the analysis of organizations, very little attention is paid to the significance of power conditions.* Power relationships are rarely presented as an essential dimension. Predominance, coercion, manipulation, and the oppression in the course of which various groups or classes are forced to adjust to the wishes of more powerful groups are seldom discussed.

These types of power are not within the definition of authority and therefore [are] not considered relevant to analysis of bureaucracies. Furthermore, when organizations are viewed as conflict-free and striving towards common goals and interests, then questions of sources and uses of power do not arise. (Zey-Ferrell, 1982. P. 449)

If power is analyzed at all, it is investigated in terms of influence and authority. The legitimacy of the prevailing conditions with regard to power and the legitimacy of the exercise of power are not called into question.

In principle, I agree with Zey-Ferrell's criticism, but I should like to offer some brief comments on its scope. As pointed out above, organization theory is a wide and complex field of research comprising a large number of different approaches. The question is just how predominant those predominant organization theories actually are. Zey-Ferrell and Aiken's anthology shows that there are several exceptions to what is termed the predominant organization theory. As for the aspects expressed in the four statements, the validity of the criticism is not equally great in all

of them. For instance, I rather doubt that the rational picture of the function of organizations is all that predominant nowadays.

Indeed, several studies in such areas as decision making favor the opposite view (see, for instance, March and Olsen, 1976). During the '70s, the "action" or "actor" outlook gained a certain amount of ground. This outlook constitutes a break with the traditional view of rationality and with the image of people as nonactive, nonacting beings (see, for example, Silverman, 1970). Other forms of criticism of the rationality view are treated later in the article. It should also be pointed out that the criticism I have just referred to applies to conditions in the United States more than to conditions in, for instance, Scandinavia, but this obviously does not mean that the criticism lacks validity with respect to the larger part of all organization theory.<sup>3</sup>

In their overview, Burrell and Morgan relate the different theoretical perspectives to the various social-science paradigms (and vice versa). These authors identify, for instance, a "radical humanism paradigm," which is characterized by an antipositivist (anti-objectivist) interpretation of science and a view of conflict in the existing social order. The Frankfurt tradition, (Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Habermas, Offe, etc.), among others, is assigned to this paradigm. An extensive organization-theoretical tradition emanating from this paradigm does not yet exist, and was even less apparent at the time of Burrell and Morgan's writing. However, attempts at one have been made, and the derivations of one such creation of organization theory can be traced to this social-science paradigm.

On this basis, Burrell and Morgan (1979. Pp. 323-24) list a number of aspects and problems that must be studied:

- (1) the concept of instrumental rationality as the predominant and most highly appreciated line of thought in organizational contexts;
- (2) rules and controlling systems effecting the execution of instrumental actions;
- (3) roles limiting human activities within narrowly defined boundaries;

(4) organizational life reflecting a kind of "communicative disturbance";

(5) the ideological mechanisms through which the worker becomes accustomed to accepting the roles, rules, and linguistic usage belonging to the workplace;

(6) the adoration of technology as a liberating force;

(7) reification, for instance, in terms of work, leisure, shortage, and profit, that mystifies the relationship between the individual human being and the world he or she lives in.

Burrell and Morgan's view of the important questions at issue for a critical organization theory can be advantageously integrated with Zey-Ferrell's criticism as stated above. Like Burrell and Morgan's book, the latter criticism can be taken as a point of departure for establishing an alternative approach to organization theory. A rough outline defining the main area of such an approach can be obtained simply by negating the points that Zey-Ferrell and Aiken have presented. Organization theory would then be characterized by, among other features, an approach that

—concentrates on the relationship between internal organization structures, processes, and ideologies, on the one hand, and the social conditions in which the organization operates, on the other;

—stresses conflicting interests and upholds the ambition to answer queries that interest mainly workers and salaried employees at lower levels;

—investigates the actions and the manner of acting that characterize different groups and associations within the framework of certain business enterprises, for instance, with regard to their ability to determine the aims and the construction of the organization;

—attempts to achieve a better understanding of the conditions that are conducive to fundamental changes in the functioning of organizations.

Whereas Burrell and Morgan focus on the rationality question and point out the questions that surround it, Zey-Ferrell brings up, in particular, social conflicts, the organizational level-social

level relationship, and the ideological aspects involved therein. From a critical-theory perspective, it is essential that the rationality question be analyzed from an explicit social-conflict perspective. In an analysis of organizational conditions, one must consider the social and economic contexts that generate both instrumental rationality, which is the predominant form in organizations (points 1 and 6 in Burrell and Morgan's enumeration above) and those organizational mechanisms that specialize and physically steer the individual according to the logic of that rationality (points 2, 3, and 5).

In the following presentation I shall adopt Zey-Ferrell's and Burrell and Morgan's points of departure in an analysis of rationality and ideology in organizations. I shall begin by reviewing some "conventional" forms of rationality criticism and demarcate these from critical organization theory's view of rationality. Then, I shall discuss, from these perspectives, the significance and influence of the predominant rationality on organizations.

### **The questioning of rationality**

Efficiency and rationality, which constitute the intellectual basis of efficiency, can be regarded in the Western world as norms that dominate management thinking and a great part of public and production-related thinking in general. Rationality can be defined as a form of intellectual efficiency in which the best course of action is chosen, given certain prerequisites and values. In reality, the value aspect tends to be repressed when rationality in a management and organizational context is being considered.

As Gustafsson (1983, P. 65) has said: "The idea of rationality consists of more than simple reason, however; it is connected with certain specific classes of action—in the terminology of management science, with specific methods. Some methods of reasoning are deemed rational and legitimate; others are not."

There are a number of different types of criticism of what is understood to be the predominant view of rationality in organizations. (The concept of rationality is defined somewhat differently depending on the type of criticism.) A common viewpoint, as

stated above, implies that since decisions are often arrived at ambiguously, a greater degree of rationality in decision making is often difficult to attain (see, for instance, March and Olsen, 1976).

There is a lengthy and broad criticism that questions the actual applications of the general rationality idea. The methods normally used to realize this rationality can be seen as far too technocratically restricted. The Neo-Human Relations school's criticism of Taylorism, restricted management, control forms, and the hierarchical-bureaucratic organizational form is perhaps the best example of this. One is not, however, critical of the dominance of the technological rationality in organizations. On the contrary, the Human Relations school's "humanism" is subordinate to it, and is regarded as an aspect to consider in order to escape the disturbances generated by the restricted technocratic methods when the social aspects of the organization's functioning are not taken into consideration.

Another form of criticism assumes that human activity is fairly "irrational" in character—in any case, in relation to the rationality that "officially" guides the activity. Organizational conditions and processes are characterized by emotionally deep structures, social defenses against anxiety, myths, rituals, etc. (see, for example, de Board, 1978; Dandridge et al., 1980). Organization researchers who stress these aspects often consider it possible to rationalize these "irrational" conditions and use them to realize the goals of the enterprise. This is achieved by business management's becoming knowledgeable about the symbols' signification and then using these instrumentally by "symbolic management" (Pfeffer, 1981).

The pluralist criticism is an additional type of criticism aimed at the predominant understanding of rationality. It is maintained that several different interested parties exist within organizations and that these groups, depending on their diverse interests, act in accordance with various rationalities. The pluralist understanding of (limited) conflicts among different interested parties has lately become fairly common (see, for instance, Zey-Ferrell and



Aiken, 1981; Berg, 1982). Perhaps it is on the verge of replacing the idea of a unitary rationality, such as conventional wisdom, in organization.

An important criticism of pluralism, when applied to the understanding of rationality, concerns the relationship between social structure and the predominant forms of conceptions characterized by the instrumental rationality, on one side, and, on the other, the organization and conflicts and the various rationalities that compete within it. The question is whether the latter are not often different variations *within* the predominant rationality in society. Many of the conflicts that the pluralists emphasize concern methods and resource allocations within organizations that aim to realize general goals (i.e., an advanced technological apparatus, maximal productivity, economic efficiency, and increase in size) and how privileges—that is, the fruits of this rationality—should be distributed. From this viewpoint, the various interested parties appear interesting and significant only in light of the predominant rationality's being taken for granted.

The mentioned forms for criticizing the predominating view of rationality—which is defined in somewhat different ways depending on what the criticism implies—do not question the dominance of the instrumental rationality in organizational practice or in organization theory and everyday thinking. The criticism is often aimed at the various restricted definitions of rationality. By pointing out the different forms of rationality and even “irrationalities” and the limited social conflicts concerning the different ideals of rationalities, one avoids a far too restricted, technocratic view of the conditions required for the realization of the predominant rationality. By attempting to broaden the way of viewing rationality, organization researchers strive to incorporate a multiplicity of aspects in a more advanced management practice. Thus, the stated criticisms of rationality are frequently normative-instrumental in character and are aimed at improving the predominant rationality—for example, by utilizing social conflicts “constructively” or by management by organizational symbolism.

What I am concentrating on is, as I said, a more general social

rationality than that treated by most critics of rationality, including the ones named above. This can be seen as the technological-capitalist society's superideology, and it is perhaps the reason little attention has been paid to this crucial aspect of organizational functioning. It has become institutionalized; its dominance is viewed as being dictated by the Law of Nature, inevitable and eternally powerful.

Although I assume that this rationality dominates and permeates the functioning of a number of organizations, this does not mean that I repudiate the viewpoints that assume that social organizations often function irrationally, that "economic man" is a myth, etc. Instrumental rationality dominates thinking and practice and constitutes the essential guiding star for organizational activity. But it is also true that individuals and collective actors act according to their cognitive, emotional, and socially conditioned restrictions, their group interests, etc., which influence the concrete expression of rationality and frequently imply that it cannot be realized very well. Thus, the idea of a general rationality does not need to imply that every individual in every situation acts in accordance with it. It can dominate in spite of many deviations, intended as well as unintended ones.

The essential criticism of technological rationality's dominance is that it is repressive. It is partly so when concerning concrete expressions and the division of labor, lack of freedom in work, the contents of work, impoverishment, alienation, etc. (see, for example, Braverman, 1974; Björkman and Lundqvist, 1981), and partly so when viewed as an ideological block to possible alternative priorities and actions (such as increased freedom and democracy in organizational functioning). In an organizational practice that is dominated by this rationality, work is made a value in itself, neither a reality nor an experienced possibility. By contrasting this rationality with its negation, in which organizational practice is guided by free and impartial choices by the organization's members of different goals, priorities, and logics of action—and in which, consequently, the value of work and democracy are seen as possible choices—the critical organization theory expresses an emancipatory interest in knowledge

(Habermas, 1966). This is most closely contrasted with technical-instrumental rationality, which is represented by the greater part of traditional organizational theory. By contrasting negation to the predominant rationality, current social conditions are subjected to a dialectic analysis.

It is important to relate the predominant rationality to the social interests that support it or, in any case, put it into practice. Critical theory does not mean, as do many Marxist authors, that the varieties of rationality are only an expression of capitalist logic or the power and interest conditions that underlie the concrete formation of technologies and organizations. It is the dominance of rationality in itself and its consequences that are essential; it cannot be reduced to only an expression of power and control conditions (something that, for example, Braverman, 1974, seems to be concerned with; compare with Burawoy, 1978).

It could be argued, however, that the dominance of technological rationality over the operational process corresponds to the interests of the predominating social strata.<sup>5</sup> By "predominating social strata" I mean, first of all, business leaders and other members of the technical-administrative elite and the owners of large funds. These people can be described as the actors of the technological rationality. Leading politicians and members of the trade-union elite can be counted among them too.

The negation of the predominant rationality corresponds more to the interests of the workers and salaried employees at lower levels than to anybody else's, although these categories and their spokesmen certainly do not always act with reference to this negation. In fact, the reverse is more common. According to empirical working-life research, these are the groups that suffer most as a result of the logic governing present-day working life. The reverse side of that logic affects their situation at work more than that of any other group. Their working conditions are characterized by monotony, unqualified tasks, and strict supervision and control. These conditions generate mental disorders and psychosomatic symptoms and contribute to making the individual's leisure hours and entire situation in life more passive (see, for

instance, Kornhauser, 1965; Gardell, 1977; Karasek, 1981). Of course, the prevailing order may affect many people higher up in the organization adversely as well—for instance, in the form of too great a work load and “managerial stress”—but in relation to the lower occupational categories at least, it is more in their interest to uphold the dominance of the prevailing rationality. Generally speaking, the job satisfaction of different groups follows the organizational hierarchy: the more exalted the post, the greater the satisfaction (Berger and Cummings, 1979).

On the basis of purely empirical results recorded by specialists in occupational research, it is possible to maintain that current conditions in working life do not correspond to the interests of most of the population (see, for example, Braverman, 1974; and Alvesson, 1983, Chap. 8). The same thesis can also be proposed with reference to Marxist class analysis or Marxist alienation theory. Organization-theoretical analysis may well engender a similar view; at the very least, it makes it easy to argue that the contradiction between the technological rationality and its negation is usually more pronounced among the lower strata in organizations. Those organizational principles whose aim is to surmount the contradiction are much more likely to achieve results at higher levels in the organizational hierarchy than at lower levels, where conditions are far less conducive to favorable change (see Alvesson, 1982, and 1983, Chap. 6).

The technical-administrative elite who manage businesses and quasi-industrial organizations (that is, organizations that function in a manner similar to industries in terms of organization of work, etc.) can be regarded as agents for reproducing the technological rationality. At the same time, however, they can be viewed as being determined by, and dependent on, the dominance of that rationality in society.

In other words, organizations (meaning the leading strata of organizations) create, maintain, and propagate this rationality and its concrete forms of expression in economic, social, and cultural contexts. Yet organizations are subservient to those restrictions with regard to their operations that are due to the dominance of the technological rationality. In a capitalist society, those

restrictions are relatively severe, as the capitalist mode of production can be comprehended as a mechanism that guarantees that social systems concerned with items such as scientific-technological development, economic rationality, productivity maximizing, etc., permanently expand and have their own forceful dynamics (Habermas, 1971).

With respect to its relationship to the technological rationality, the company—or, to be more precise, various strata within the company—forms a subject as well as an object: while reproducing this rationality and contributing to its dominance, the company is governed by that same rationality. Thus, companies also form expressions of the dominance of the technological rationality. This subject/object dimension can serve as a starting-point for a differentiation of the actors in the company: The leading stratum of the company—chiefly actors whose actions are intentional and influence the environment—is a subject rather than an object. Conversely, employees working at the lower levels of contemporary businesses are often reduced to objects, that is, to passive, controlled operators obliged to adjust to the demands of the market and of the manufacturing process—demands passed on to them by way of the company's leading stratum. Of course, this differentiation according to a subject/object dimension is partly a question of power; but it also involves the demands of the highly advanced, large-scale technology. Not much scope is left for the subjectivity, intentional resources, and acting capabilities of individuals; and what scope there is, is reserved largely for managers.

### **The questioning of ideology**

As stated above, the technological rationality functions not only as pure reason but also as ideology. It is now time to develop the latter aspect. The concept of ideology is frequently used within organizational and social research and has a multiplicity of different meanings. Hartley (1983) discerns two central ones: as a cognitive or social distortion of reality, and as a set of systematically structured values and ideas about the state of the world and

what it should be, in terms of social groups and social arrangements. In the first meaning it is possible to differentiate between such conceptions as reality and ideology; in the second this is, of course, impossible.

In this article the concept of ideology is used in a third sense. It represents a form of conception in which the technological rationality's dominance is taken for granted and regarded as a natural, inevitable, and unchangeable phenomenon. It is not a question of a cognitive or social distortion of reality; neither is it a set of values and ideas about the social world that usually is recognized as such, that is, recognized as ideology. Ideology can be defined as "technological rationality" that claims to be "overall rationality," "partial truth" that claims to be "the whole truth." It deals with the concealment of value premises, the redefinition of value issues as rationality problems of a technical nature (cf. Habermas, 1971).

The technological rationality's ideology can be seen as a "superideology" for the late-capitalist society and for the producing organizations within it. It is supported by various "smaller" ideologies, for example, concerning the nature of work, consumer demand as insatiable, humanism and democracy as inevitable features of efficient management practice, and technocracy and elitism in organizations (for critical reviews, see, respectively, Anthony, 1978; Galbraith, 1979; and Thompson, 1980).<sup>6</sup>

The point is, for me and for the critical theory, that the dominance of the technological rationality is a part of a socially constructed reality that requires continuous social constructions, including ideological control, in order to persist (cf. Salaman, 1980; Thompson, 1980).

A society and an organizational practice built on the dominance of the technological rationality call for a highly developed ideology capable of covering the contradictions and the criticism caused by the technological rationality. What this means is that "disturbing" thoughts and actions whose purpose is to reduce the dominance of this rationality are obstructed and counteracted. In his description of the supremacy of such an ideology, Marcuse

(1964) spoke of one-dimensional society, thought, and man.

The advocates of instrumental rationality require, and make various efforts to stimulate the production of, consensus concerning the dominance of this rationality. To be successful they need an ideology-production system that covers general social conditions as well as matters specifically connected with business policies. Against this background the prevailing organization theory—in particular, the organization theory that belongs to the field of business administration—can be more readily understood. Here, research and the formation of a theory contribute to the emergence of a consensus. One way of achieving this is to emphasize, at the theoretical level, problems relevant to a realization of the instrumental rationality. Problems connected with the alternative rationality are, however, reduced or taken for granted. In this manner, a world picture that supports the former rationality is transmitted.

The development of concepts and conceptions that lend a humanistic dimension to the predominating rationality is essential in the formation of a consensus. Such a development suggests that striving for efficiency is compatible with humanism. This organization theory (represented by, among others, McGregor and Schein) has had a greater impact on the level of conceptions and ideas than on actual practice. In the formation of a consensus it can be used in two ways. First, the organization theory bestows legitimacy on the predominant rationality, at a societal-ideological level and in respect to conditions in working life. Second, it constitutes a link in the process of qualification in the course of which individuals are fitted for practice within the technological rationality (business leaders, for instance, and administrators and technicians, at the intermediary management level and higher up). With the aid of the organization theory, they are prepared for their practice in more ways than one. For one thing, the humanistic character of those theories helps them dismiss their own doubts and critical reflections concerning the prevailing conditions; in addition, they learn to master a humanistic language and certain techniques (democratic leadership, for example) that

make it easier to counteract other people's critical views about their conditions. All this increases their ability to fulfill their obligations as business managers, etc. Hence, these organizational theories contribute to socializing and qualifying the individual for a kind of activity in which the ideology facilitates adjustment and success.<sup>7</sup>

This favorable aspect of the acquisition of an ideology is obvious to business managers and other leaders acquainted with management ideologies.

### Conclusion

Within traditional organization theory, and even within different attempts to criticize and further develop it, the predominant technological rationality of the late capitalist society and of the majority of producing organizations is taken for granted. This applies even to attempts at criticizing the far too restricted or distorted conceptualizations of the rationality concept (in which, for instance, emotional, symbolic, or pluralist aspects of how organizations work are not considered). The technological rationality constitutes a fundamental aspect of the traditional organizational-theoretical paradigm—a part of the world picture that is taken for granted—and is consequently not brought forward as something that it is essential to analyze critically.

In the critical organization theory, with its paradigmatic roots in the Frankfurt tradition and with its closely related authors, the influence and effect of the instrumental rationality on organizational practice constitute an essential object of analysis. Its dominance is understood to be a remarkable phenomenon and an interesting research problem.

The critical organization theory expresses an emancipatory interest in knowledge by pointing out the destructive consequences of the instrumental rationality and by contrasting the idea of negation with it. This means that existing social conditions become relative, i.e., seen as typical for a certain social and historical epoch and changeable in principle. The aim is to



contribute to a way of looking and knowing that would enable the members of an organization to carry on a rational discussion about values and priorities and, on the basis of them, to be able to make free and democratic decisions concerning organizational practice.

An important part of this context is the internal scientific criticism of theories, ways of viewing and social-technological methods in traditional organizational research. Here ideologies are produced and reproduced with the aim of supporting the instrumental rationality and the management practice in which that rationality can directly find expression. Thus, these ideologies help to legitimize existing social conditions.

### Notes

1. Thus, the criticism voiced by Zey-Ferrell and Aiken does not primarily refer to the so-called humanistic organization theory that provides one of the foci of my discussion. However, the criticism is probably, by and large at least, applicable to this organization theory as well.

2. Still, talking about the goals/aims/targets, etc., and actions of organizations must be a permissible paraphrase (simplification) of the goals, etc., and actions of individuals and groups, if the overwhelming majority of individuals in the organization are behind, and are able to influence, the goals and actions concerned.

3. One conceivable objection against the criticism that says that the interests of the technical-administrative elite in organizations are too heavily stressed is found in the argument that many studies of the comparative kind stand for a theoretical interest, not an applied one. Benson (1977. P. 5) makes the following comment on this objection: "... it is clear that the basic problematic underlying these works has a technical-administrative orientation. Questions are posed from the standpoint of a hypothetical administrative actor, for example, what is the best fit of structure to technology? What is the most rational structural response to increases of size?"

4. "Communicative disturbance" is a concept developed by Habermas. Roughly, it can be designated as a superficial consensus due to the communications' being affected by unequal power conditions among the interested parties and by the fact that the target-rational subsystem is more predominant than the symbolic communicative system. (A good explanation and discussion of Habermas's theory of communication are found in Connerton, 1980. Chap. 6.)

5. The following section draws upon M. Alvesson (1984) "A Critical Framework for Organizational Analysis. Towards a Critical Organization Theory." Unpublished manuscript, Department of Business Administration, University of Lund.

6. M. Alvesson (1984) "The Role of Ideology in Organization Theory." Unpublished manuscript, Department of Applied Psychology, University of Lund.

7. Ibid.

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